

Urges Panel to Consider Mitchell-Flake Bill for More Non-Stop Flights from Phoenix; Cites Letter Signed by All Eight U.S. Representatives from Arizona

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep. Harry E. Mitchell [last night wrote](#) to the Chairman of a Senate Subcommittee, urging his subcommittee to consider bipartisan legislation, H.R. 1941, he introduced with Reps. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.), Dean Heller (R-Nev.) and Dina Titus (D-Nev.) to allow more non-stop flights from western cities like Phoenix, Arizona to Washington Reagan National Airport (DCA).

"Arizonans should have just as much right to fly into and out of the nation's capital as anyone else, and our bill would significantly improve our ability to do that," said Mitchell, a member of the House Subcommittee on Aviation. "It has broad, bipartisan support, and I hope the Senators will consider it as part of their discussion today."

The Senate Subcommittee on Aviation Operations, Safety and Security is holding a hearing today on the DCA "perimeter rule", which severely restricts the number of non-stop flights allowed into the airport from cities located more than 1,250 miles away from the nation's capital.

H.R. 1941 currently has 31 bipartisan co-sponsors. In June, 25 House Members - including all 8 U.S. Representatives from Arizona: Reps. Harry Mitchell, Jeff Flake, Ed Pastor, John Shadegg, Raul Grijavla, Trent Franks, Gabrielle Giffords and Ann Kirkpatrick - [wrote to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee](#) , urging them to include H.R. 1941 in a final Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization bill.

According to the Los Angeles Times, "A proposal to ease an antiquated 'perimeter rule' without increasing congestion is a fair deal." [Source: [Los Angeles Times](#) , July 19, 2010; [San Francisco Chronicle](#) , July 18, 2010]

Both the House and Senate have already passed their own versions of FAA Reauthorization, and the two chambers are currently negotiating a final bill. A final decision regarding how many non-stop flights from western cities into DCA is one of the final issues in need of resolution before a final bill can clear Congress. [Source: [The Hill](#), July 27, 2010]

Out-Dated Rule Restricts Non-Stop Flights from Phoenix to DCA

Currently, DCA is the only major airport in the nation that restricts access from cities located more than 1,250 miles away from it. The rule was originally intended to help encourage passengers to begin using Washington Dulles Airport when it was first built in Northern Virginia the 1960s, more than 25 miles west of the nation's capital.

Dulles has since become one of the nation's busiest airports, and is no longer in need of special protection from Congress.

In recent years, Congress has begun allowing very limited and controlled exemptions to the perimeter rule. Currently, only a dozen nonstop flights are permitted daily between DCA and the entire western United States-four flights to Denver, three to Phoenix, two to Seattle, one to Las Vegas, one to Los Angeles, and one to Salt Lake City.

Objections to More Non-Stop Flights from Western Cities

Smaller cities in the eastern United States, located within the 1,250 miles of the nation's capital, fear that if more non-stop flights from western cities are allowed into DCA, major

carriers will choose to add more flights to big, western cities like Phoenix, and reduce flights to smaller, less popular destinations in eastern states.

Mitchell-Flake Offers Plan to Help Arizona Without Riling Eastern Objections

Under H.R.1941, carriers that currently have slots at DCA would be permitted to convert flights now serving large hub airports inside the DCA perimeter into flights serving airports outside the perimeter.

The approach would ensure that small and medium-sized communities inside the perimeter would not be adversely impacted.

Below is the text of Rep. Mitchell's letter:

September 15, 2010

The Honorable Byron Dorgan

Chairman

Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation

Subcommittee on Aviation Operations, Safety and Security

427 Hart Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Dorgan:

As the Subcommittee on Aviation Operations, Safety and Security prepares for its hearing on September 16, 2010 concerning the Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA) perimeter rule, I wish to call your attention to the broad, bipartisan support that H.R. 1941 has received so far in the U.S. House of Representatives, as well as support for inclusion of H.R. 1941 in a final F.A.A. Reauthorization bill.

As you know, the perimeter rule has long discriminated against passengers from western states like Arizona by severely restricting the number of non-stop flights from cities located more than 1,250 miles from DCA.

H.R. 1941 would increase the number of long-distance flights into and out of DCA without adding additional takeoffs or landings at DCA, while also protecting service to smaller cities located within the 1,250 mile perimeter.

Under H.R. 1941, which has 31 bipartisan cosponsors, carriers that currently have slots at DCA would be permitted to convert flights now serving large hub airports inside the perimeter into flights serving airports outside the perimeter. The approach would ensure that small and medium-sized communities inside the perimeter would not be adversely impacted.

In June, a bipartisan coalition of 25 House members sent a letter to Chairman James Oberstar at the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, urging the inclusion of H.R. 1941 in a final F.A.A. Reauthorization bill. Enclosed is a copy of that letter.

I hope you will consider H.R. 1941 at tomorrow's hearing, and will consider including it in a final F.A.A. Reauthorization bill.

Sincerely,

Harry E. Mitchell

Member of Congress

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Cc The Honorable John D. Rockefeller

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